

The Necessity of preaching the GOSPEL in GOSPEL
LANGUAGE: 4

Being A

SERMON

Preach'd at An

Ordination at *Darlington*

IN THE

BISHOPRICK of *DURHAM*.

By JAMES ATKINSON, R

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NORTH UMBERLAND.

1 COR. ix. 16.

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me: yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.

GAL. i. 6, 7.

I marvel, that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

ROM. i. 16, 17.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believe, &c. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, &c.

Hoc enim verè possumus affirmare, ignorantiam differentiae legis & evangelii, plurimis maximisque erroribus occasionem præbuisse, quibus hodiè christiana religio perturbatur: ---- That is,

For we can truly affirm this; that the Ignorance of the difference of the law and gospel has afforded occasion to the most and greatest Errours, with which the christian religion is at this day disturbed.

Beza Confes. Christ. fid. cap. iv. §. 23. p. 73. Lond. 1575.

Newcastle upon Tine:

Printed by JOHN WHITE, for the AUTHOR, and
Sold by the Booksellers in *Durham* and *Newcastle*,

[Price 6d.]

MDCCLXXIX.



The Preface to the READER.



THE occasion of preaching and printing the following sermon is this: I was desired by the ministers that meet sometimes at Newcastle upon Tyne to preach at Mr. Wood's ordination at Darlington, July 17. 1728. if the reverend Mr. Thompson of Stockton refused; he refused, and therefore I preached according to my promise. After some consideration, &c. what text to preach upon, I fixed upon the following I Cor. i. 17. and delivered from it such truths as I did then, and do still believe, are agreeable to the holy scriptures: Yet several weeks after the preaching of it, it was represented, (as I was credibly inform'd) as a sermon erroneous, and of dangerous tendency; or as containing in it a doctrine that ill consequences might be drawn from; for this and other reasons I am willing to print it; and that thereby I may give my reverend brethren in the ministry a fair opportunity to correct that wherein they judge I err; and if any one of them will be so kind as to shew me one erring sentence in this sermon, (for I declare I do not yet know any,) I will be very thankful, and publicly retract it. It is true there has some letters pass'd betwixt the reverend Mr. Bourne of South-Shields and me, but not any thing have I received from him to convince me that my sermon contains error, but much that may justly greaten the occasion of printing it, or any thing else, that may be
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a means through the blessing of the Lord, to put a stop to growing error. I have not added to, nor taken away any word from those Sentences, which according to the report the charge was grounded on. I have added some things, and several Quotations.

I do readily own, that in studying and preaching the sermon I did not seek to please any man, but (I hope) to please God that tries the heart, and to profit those that heard it.

What I have said concerning the gospel's being a pure doctrine of grace, about it's being taken largely and improperly, strictly and properly, and distinguished from the Law; and that strictly and properly taken, and distinguished from the Law, the gospel has neither precept, nor threatening in it, and is neither new nor old law, yea, nor any law at all; is no other than what our reformers, and many eminent protestant writers have said, both ancient and modern, as appears from the Quotations in the sermon. And that this may be more evident, and that what they have said is truth, I will give you a few quotations and the arguments that have, or may be advanced, to prove that the gospel is no law; and that the opinion that the gospel is a new law is a very great and dangerous error.

I will first give you a few quotations. Phil. Melancton saith, It is necessary that the precepts and pardon of sin be discriminated, and that a difference be put between precepts and promises, and also between the promises of meer grace, and those which are not so. And by these lines (as Mr. Goodwin saith) he draws the description of the opposite natures of law and gospel; that the first is a doctrine of precepts, the other a doctrine of promises. Our adversaries, saith Melancton, (speaking of the papists)

tho' they bawl out that they teach the gospel, yet because they do not instruct the people concerning reconciliation with God freely of pure grace, they leave consciences in doubt, and for the gospel teach the law. John Calvin *saitb*, Now I take the gospel for the clear disclosing of the mystery of Christ. I grant truly, that in that respect that *Paul* calls the gospel the doctrine of faith, all the promises that we here and there find in the law, concerning the free forgiveness of sins, whereby God reconciles men to himself, are accounted parts thereof.—Whereupon follows, that in taking the name of the gospel largely, there are contained under it all the testimonies, that God in the old time gave to the fathers, of his mercy and fatherly favour: But in the more excellent signification of it, I say it is applied to the publishing of the grace given in Christ. They (*saitb* he) who have not apprehended these things, (*viz. that Christ did not come to give new laws, but to interpret the old, and to restore it to it's true spiritual meaning, of which he largely discourses before*) have feigned Christ to be another *Moses*, the maker of an evangelical law, which should have supplied the defect of that of *Moses*. Whereupon comes that common principle of perfection of the law of the gospel, which far passes the old law, [which is a most pernicious opinion].

Beza *saitb*, for whereas the gospel propounded by *Moses* under legal figures, &c. was therefore published to the world, that we may be freely justified and sanctified in Christ, apprehended by faith, as we have in it's proper place copiously demonstrated. They (*viz. the papists*) on the contrary think the evangelical doctrine to be nothing else but a certain law, more perfect than that of *Moses*. You may observe

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serve that this pious and learned man rejects the notion of the gospel's being a law, as an article of the popish faith.

Zanchius saith, but the gospel which is the other essential part of holy scripture, is a doctrine or scripture, which declares free salvation in Christ by faith. In another Discourse, Zanchius tells us, that the gospel is the joyful preaching of that eternal and free love of God (this is eternal election) towards us in his beloved son Christ.

These with several other quotations you have in Mr. Tho. Goodwin's discourse of the true nature of the gospel, pag. 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.

To these (saith he) I might add a cloud of other witnesses, to evince that it was the faith which universally obtained among all the reformed churches in several nations, and was earnestly maintained by all protestant writers against the papists, that the gospel, in the peculiar nature of it, is no other than a System of Promises, a Discovery of God's Mercy and grace in Christ and a proclamation of free pardon and justification. Lambertus Danæus, Mart. Chemnitius, Osvaldus Myconius, David Pareus, Dan. Chamier, Joan. Gerrardus, Ant. Walleus, Altingius, And. Rivetus, with innumerable others, write harmoniously in the same strain.

Now is it not pity, sad, and lamentable that this doctrine should be counted erroneous and dangerous, opposed and reproached, yea denied, and the popish opinion preached up by such as profess themselves protestants; tho' they are against this and other protestant doctrines, which are clearly revealed in the scriptures, which are the word of God. I will give a few more of our protestant divines that have taught the same doctrine. Bishop Downname, in his answer to the papist

Bellarmino's *assertion*, That in the gospel is contained the doctrine of works, and divers laws, and that the promises thereof require the condition of fulfilling the law, *saieth*, "*His intent (viz. Bellarmine's) in this is to disprove that difference, which we make between the law and the gospel.*"—For the better understanding whereof, we are to distinguish the terms both of the law and gospel: which are used sometimes more largely, sometimes more strictly and properly. More largely, *Thorah* the law signifies the whole doctrine of the old testament, whether written and contained in the books of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, &c. In this large sense the evangelical promises made in the old testament are contained in the law, tho' properly belonging to the gospel, as Bellarmine confesses: The promises of remission of sins tho' they be in the prophets, they do not belong to the law, but to the gospel. So more largely the gospel is taken for the whole doctrine of the new testament, whether written by the apostles and evangelists, or preached, Mar. xiii. 10. Rom. x. 16. Gal. ii. 5, 14. Ephes. vi. 19. Col. i. 5. Phil. i. 27. 2 Thes. i. 8. Thus the histories of the life and death of Christ are called gospels, Mar. i. 1. Matth. xxvi. 13. In this large sense it is truly said, that the precepts, promises, and comminations of the law are contained in the gospel.

More strictly and properly the law signifies the Covenant of Works, which is also called the law of works, Rom. iii. 27.—

Likewise *εὐαγγέλιον*, the gospel which imports good tidings, signifies more strictly and properly the covenant of grace, which is also called the law of faith, Rom. iii. 27. And the word of faith, Rom. x. 8. which freely promises justification, and right of salvation to all that believe in Christ, Joh. iii. 15, 16, &c.

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&c. Rom. iii. 24, &c. *This doctrine of God concerning salvation by Christ thro' faith, which properly is the gospel, Luke iv. 18. Matth. xi. 5. Rom. i. 16, 17. Acts xv. 7. Gal. i. 6. and iii. 8. Acts x. 36. is called the Gospel of Grace, Acts xx. 24. The word of reconciliation, 2 Cor. v. 18. The gospel of peace, Ephes. vi. 15. This doctrine teaches us, that our gracious God out of his mere grace having elected his children in Christ before all times, did in the fulness of time send down his son to save us: and that the benefits of the Messias might be applied unto us, vouchsafes unto us the gospel of grace, by which according to the purpose of his grace given unto us in Christ before all secular times, (2 Tim. i. 9.) he calls us working in us the grace of faith.—But as those promises and doctrine of grace contained in the old Testament, did not belong to the law properly which is the covenant of works, but to the gospel which is the covenant of grace: So in the books of the new testament, divers precepts, comminations, and promises are contained, which belong not properly to the gospel, which is the covenant of grace and law of faith, but to the law of works. Treat. Justif. lib. vii. cap. iv. §. 3, 4, 5. pag. 464, 465, 466, 467. Mr. Pemble, in his answer to Bellarmine, who had asserted that the gospel contained comminations and threatnings as the law doth, saith, Altho', by a Synecdoche of the chiefest and most excellent part, the whole doctrine and ministry of Christ and his apostles with their successors, be called the doctrine of the gospel, and the ministry of the gospel: yet all things which they preached or wrote, is not the gospel properly so called: but as Moses chiefly deliver'd the law unto the jews, tho' yet with all he wrote of Christ, and so in part revealed unto them the gospel: So Christ and his ministers, tho' they*

they chiefly preached the gospel, yet they in it's place urge the law withal, as that which has it's singular use in furthering our christian faith and practice. Wherefore when we speak of the gospel as opposite to the law, it is a jesuitical equivocation to take it in this large sense; for the whole doctrine of Christ and his apostles, preached by them, and written for us in the books of the new testament. We follow the apostle in this dispute of justification, Gal. iii. And according as he doth take the gospel strictly for the promise of justification and life made unto man in Christ Jesus. This is in proper terms the gospel, (viz.) that special doctrine touching man's redemption and reconciliation with God by means of Jesus Christ; the revelation whereof was indeed [εὐαγγέλιον] the gladdest tidings that were ever brought to the ear of mortal man. Which gospel in strict terms the angels preached, Luke ii. 10, 11. Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, &c. And afterward Christ and his apostles fully explained the mysteries thereof unto the world. According to this necessary distinction, we answer; that if we take the gospel in that large acception, it is true which Bellarmine has; that the gospel contains in it the doctrine of works, (viz.) the moral law, even the very same precepts, prohibitions, threatnings and promises which are delivered in the law.—But hence it follows not, that the gospel properly so taken, is to be confounded as one and the same thing with the law, because the law is conjoyned with it in the preachings and writings of the ministers of the new testament. They still are divided in their nature and offices. Vind. grat. & fid. Treat. Just. § 4. chap. i. pag. 218. 219.

Mr. Ant. Burgess saith, If the gospel be taken strictly, it is not a doctrine of repentance, or holy works;

works; but a meer gracious promise of Christ to the broken heart for sin; and doth comprehend no more than the glad tidings of a saviour.—But in a strict sense it's only a promise of Christ, and his benefits: and in this sense we may say, the gospel doth not terrifie, or accuse. Indeed there are woful threatnings to him that rejects Christ; yea, more severe than to him that refused Moses: but this arises from the law joyned in practical use with the gospel. And in this sense also it is said to be the favour of death unto many. This arises not from the nature of the gospel, but from the law, that is enlightened by the gospel: so that he being already condemned by the law, for not believing in Christ, he needs not to be condemned again by the gospel. *Vind. Leg. pag. 252, 253.*

I will now give you some arguments to prove that the gospel strictly and properly taken is no law, and to shew you that it is a dangerous, yea a destructive error or opinion to teach, hold, and believe that the gospel so taken is any law, new, or old, mild, gracious, or severe.

(i) The gospel is a pure doctrine of grace and no new law, because there is a difference and distinction between the gospel, and the law; the gospel is called the word of God's grace, and the gospel of peace which brings glad tidings of good things. That there is a difference and distinction between the gospel and the law is evident from these texts, Isa. viii. 20. John i. 17. Rom. vi. 14, 15. Acts xx. 32. Rom. x. 5, 15.

(ii) * That account alone of the glorious gospel, that tends only to exalt the grace of God, the merit of Christ, and the fullness of the covenant in a scriptural way, for scriptural

*Mr. Ryther,
def. glor. gos.
pag. 1, 2. 3.

ral ends, cannot but be true. But that account of the glorious gospel that makes it a pure doctrine of grace and no law, is that alone that tends only to exalt the grace of God, the merit of Christ, and the fulness of the covenant, in a scriptural way, for spiritual ends. Ergo it cannot but be true.

The major cannot be denied.

I will prove the minor by an induction of particulars therein.

(1) It exalts the grace of God, in providing all the whole salvation for lost souls.

(1) It provides Christ, John iii. 16. For God so loved, &c.

(2) All with him, 1 Joh. v. 11. And this is the record, &c.

(1) Pardon, Heb. viii. 12. For I will be merciful to, &c.

(2) Righteousness, 2 Cor. v. 21. For he has made, &c.

(3) A new heart, with all its vital principles, Heb. viii. 10.

I will put my laws into their mind, &c. with Ezek. xxxvi. 26. A new heart also will I give you, &c. All these are contained in those words, Rom. vi. 23, The gift of God is eternal life, thro' Jesus Christ our lord. But a law gives nothing. provides nothing, until it be obeyed.

(2) It exalts the merit of Christ, of his obedience and blood, by which all is meritoriously procured, Heb. ix. 12. By his own blood he entered in, once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption; hereby procuring repentance as well as pardon upon it, faith, as well as pardon and justification upon it. Repentance; Acts v. 31. Him has God, &c. Faith; Phil. i. 29. For unto you it is given, &c.

(3) It exalts the fulness of the covenant, the promises, in giving all that is provided of grace, and meritoriously procured by Christ: 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. According as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, &c. Rom. iv. 13, 14, 16. For the promise that he should, &c. Gal. iii. 16, 17, 18. God making good the absolute promises, gives all his grace that he has provided, and his son merited. But a law cannot give these.

(iii) This notion, that the gospel is a new law supposes that man has by nature power and ability to obey it. It is neither consistent with the wisdom nor justice of God to give a law when man had no power to obey it. But man by nature has no power to obey any law, that requires obedience unto God, for he is without life and strength, dead in trespasses and

sin.

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Just. Ephes. ii. 1. Rom. v. 6. Therefore there is no new law given to fallen man. † When a law-giver gives a law, he supposes his subjects are able in some measure to observe it, enjoying common protection and encouragement from him, as they have in other cases; or else the law is void in itself, requiring things that were known to be impossible before the law was made, for *nemo tenetur ad impossibile*: And it is vain, because never like to obtain the end for which it was made. Now by this opinion the gospel is a new-law, and God a law-giver in granting terms of salvation. These terms are not only as the order and way wherein we must be saved, but as proper conditions upon the fulfilling whereof salvation doth wholly depend, viz. God seeing that man is lost by the fall and unable ever to get out of that condition, condescending to him, has made a new law requiring him to serve him but sincerely and heartily, tho' he cannot perfectly: and promises, if he will do so, that he shall be saved for his own son's sake, who has fulfilled the law of perfect obedience; and if he will not be thus obedient, then he shall perish without hope of any further remedy. This doth suppose that man is able to fulfil the conditions of this new law with that common assistance, protection, and encouragement that God usually grants in other cases. The same Author (in pag. 52, 53, 54.) shews that it is not consistent with the wisdom and justice of God to make a new law (whereby man should be saved from the curse of the old law) which man had no power to fulfill, and that this makes the whole work of grace, and perseverance from the beginning to the end to depend upon man's own will and own strength chiefly.

† Mr. Trough.
Luth. Red. 1
 part. pag. 51.
 52.

(iv) * That opinion of the gospel that is not at all suited to relieve fallen man, in his deplorable condition cannot hold. But this opinion of the gospel is not at all suited to relieve fallen man in his deplorable condition. Therefore it cannot hold. The major (saith he) is clear, and the minor I prove by the scriptural account of a man's condition by nature; and the nature of this new law compared together, by the scriptural account of man by nature, we find he is dead and cannot move, blind and cannot see, Ephes. ii. 1. and iv. 18. Now in this condition, this new law finds man; and what does it say to him?

* Mr. Ryther,
defen. glor.
gof. pag. 9.
 10.

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It commands this dead man to walk and work, and this blind man to see (for it commands faith, repentance, and sincere obedience): and then it promises pardon, and life, but gives no life, no light.—Men may call it a remedial law, the only remedial law, but it leaves fallen man deplorably without life; and indeed rather insults his miseries than affords any help; for it can do nothing 'till it's conditions are fulfilled, and fulfilled they cannot be by man dead and blind. But the account of the gospel I plead for, relieves man by giving all——.

* Mr. Ryther,
def. glor. gosf,
pag. 5, 6.

(v)* *That notion of the gospel that confounds the covenant of works and grace, law and gospel cannot be true. But this making the gospel a law, confounds the covenant of works and grace, law and gospel. Therefore it cannot be true. The major, I suppose, will not be denied; the minor I (saith he) prove thus. That notion of the gospel, that makes it require faith, repentance and sincere obedience, as conditions of it's blessings, takes away the main essential difference between the two covenants. But this notion of the gospel makes it require faith, repentance, and sincere obedience, as conditions of it's blessings. Therefore this notion takes away the main essential difference between the two covenants. The major is evident by this. Any thing required as a condition of obtaining gospel blessings, is a covenant of works, the language of both is, do this and live: And so the great difference is taken away, which is this. In a covenant of works something is required as a condition of life; in the gospel or covenant of grace, faith, and repentance which are it's blessings, are given, and then required as duties. This, and this only keeps up the main essential difference, upon which all the rest depend; as for their being gospel works, or imperfect that alters not the case.*

† Mr. Ryther,
def. glor. gosf.
pag. 11. 12.

(vi.) † *That doctrine that casts no malign, but benign influence upon holiness, and fixes it upon it's right base, is no false doctrine. But this notion of the gospel, that I contend for, is such as casts no malign, but benign influence upon holiness, and fixes it upon it's right base. Therefore it's no false doctrine. The major is undoubted. The minor appears thus by the two particulars therein mentioned.*

(1) *It casts no malign influence upon holiness; it encourages*

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no sin, but shews the necessity of an interest in the grace, the Christ, the covenant of God, in order to salvation; and 'till then binds men's sins, God's wrath, and therefore their own miseries upon them, Joh. iii. 18, 36. Luke xiii. 3, 5.

(2) But a benign influence upon holiness, fixing it upon it's right base, which is a saving vital union to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, Joh. xv. 5. Now a spiritual discovery made to the soul by the spirit of God (conviction of sin, and wrath being made first by the same spirit) of the riches of grace, purchase of Christ, and the promises of the covenant holding forth both these, is that by which the soul is led to Christ for holiness, as well as righteousness, Isa. xlv. 24. 1 Cor. i. 30. Col. iii. 11. 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. Such a faith and union with Christ is the only security of holiness. Whereas the gospel being made a law, begins at the wrong end, requiring works, faith, holiness, before union with Christ, and practically kept to subverts the whole gospel, whereas these that follow justification do not go before. Several other arguments might have been given, but these do fully prove that the gospel is a doctrine of grace, and not any Law, new or old, mild, gracious, or severe; and also that to hold, and teach that the gospel is a new law, a most perfect law is a dangerous and destructive error, and practically kept to subverts the whole gospel, turns the covenant of grace into a covenant of works, it brings in justification by our own works, &c. * Is not the design of it (saith Mr. Ryther) to bring in and establish a righteousness of our own in justification, called by some evangelical, by some subordinate, but truly anti-evangelical, and opposite to grace, and Christ's righteousness? Luther opening these words, viz. and would pervert the gospel of Christ, saith, that is to say, they do not only go about to trouble you, but also utterly to abolish and overthrow Christ's gospel. For these two things the Devil practices most busily. First, he is not contented to trouble and deceive many by his false apostles, but more over he labours utterly to overthrow the gospel by them, and never rests 'till he has brought it to pass. Yet such perverters of the gospel can abide nothing less, than to hear that they are the apostles of the devils: nay they rather glory above others in the name of Christ, and boast themselves to be the most sincere preachers of the gospel. But

* Def. glor. gos. pag. 31.

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because they mingle the law and the gospel together, they cannot but be the perverters of the gospel. Where the righteousness of grace reigns, there cannot the righteousness of the law reign: for one of them must needs give place to the other. And if thou canst not believe, that God will forgive thy sins for Christ's sake, whom he sent into the world to be our high priest: how then I pray thee, wilt thou believe that he will forgive the same for the works of the law, which thou couldst never perform: or for thine own works, which (as thou must be compelled to confess) be such, as it is impossible for them to counter-vail the judgment of God? Wherefore the doctrine of grace can by no means stand with the doctrine of the law. For as Paul saith here, to mingle the one with the other, is to overthrow the gospel of Christ.

It seems to be a light matter to mingle the law and the gospel, faith and works together: but it doth more mischief than man's reason can conceive. For it doth not only blemish and darken the knowledge of grace, but also it takes away Christ with all his benefits, and it utterly overthrows the gospel, as Paul saith in this place. The cause of this great evil is our flesh: which being plunged in sins, sees no way how to get out but by works, and therefore it would live in the righteousness of the law, and rest in the trust and confidence of her own works. Wherefore it is the utterly ignorant of the doctrine of faith and grace, without which notwithstanding it is impossible for the conscience to find rest and quietness. Luth. Expos. Gal. i. 7. fol. 27, 28, 29.

The bringing in an everlasting righteousness of which the prophet Daniel speaks, is by some understood of Christ's having given us his gospel, as the law of everlasting righteousness; but the gospel is not a law, but a doctrine of grace; nor doth Christ ever intimate, that he came to bring in a new law, which must have put an end to that in force before, unless any can be stupid enough to think, that Christ would keep in force two such very different laws at once; but our Saviour says he did not come to destroy the law but to fulfil it (Mat. v. 17.): And the apostle says, We are under the law to Christ (1 Cor. ix. 21.); yet a man is not justified by the works of the law, not by his own righteousness, but by the righteousness of God without the law, the righteousness which is wrought

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wrought out by Christ, imputed by God, received by faith, which sort of righteousness the law knew nothing of (Rom. iii. 21.); but required every person under it, to do all things contained in it, and denounced a curse upon the least failure or violation of it, Gal. iii. 10. If there were such a gospel law in being it is very strange that Christ did not solemnly proclaim it, fix some marks of distinction upon it, whereby we might know it, and that the writers of the new-testament should so often speak of the moral law, as still in force, and expressly say, the law is not of faith; that if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; and that if there had been a law given, which could have given life, righteousness had been by the law. Gal. iii. 11. 18. Here surely had been a just occasion to distinguish between the moral and evangelical law, (and it seemed very necessary to prevent any mistake in a matter of such importance) for us to have been told, that the moral law could not give us life, yet there is a gospel law that can and doth; the apostle saith, is the law against the promise? God forbid! Gal. iii. 21. But it is, I think impossible, to reconcile a law that requires personal perfect obedience, and curses every one that continues not in all things written therein to do them, with this gospel law; which, as it is said, absolves, and acquits men upon an imperfect obedience, and righteousness in themselves. The apostle (Rom. ix. 30, 31.) makes a very plain distinction between the law of righteousness, which he says the Jews had not attained to, and the righteousness of faith, to which the Gentiles had attained. The righteousness of faith is not then a law righteousness, but a gospel righteousness, even that of which the Prophet speaks, Isa. xlv. 24. Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength. To what purpose can such a law of faith as some plead for, serve, but to exalt a man's own righteousness, and debase the righteousness of Christ, as not sufficient, or not appointed to justify us fully, before God? Surely this is not the way to exclude boasting, but to promote it, it is not the way to establish the moral law, but to make it void, contrary to the apostle's words (Rom. iii. 31.), do we then, thro' faith, make void the Law? God forbid; yea we establish the law. It gave a wonderful Sanction and honour

honour to the moral law, that Christ fulfilled it for us, and therein made it evident, that not one tittle of it could pass, 'till all was fulfilled (Matth. v. 18.) Thus faith establishes the law, tho' properly it is it self no law; for abrogating the ceremonial law the reason is evident; but for making void the moral law and erecting another in it's room, there is no apparent reason at all. If the moral law was at first agreeable to God's holy nature, and will, it is so still; and there is the same reason of it's continuance, as of it's first institution. You may see more to this purpose in that excellent book of the Rev. Mr. John Hurion, who succeeds the late Rev. Mr. Nesbit, Entituled, The Knowledge of Christ, &c. pag. 354, 355, 356, 357, 358.

I might (one would have thought) have open'd the gospel in that way and manner that the first reformers and many other famous ministers of Christ have done since, and many still do, without being reckoned erroneous for it, and my sermon of dangerous consequence. But I need not wonder at it, because in some sermons at the ministers meeting there have been things delivered which were disagreeable to the protestant doctrines. You may see, that I have preach'd no other doctrine than many other protestants have done; and I do believe it to be the revealed will of God, and therefore I have preach'd it. And I have seen more cause for preaching such doctrine than I did see before; because it has been spoken against, and that the gospel is a law preached.

I hope, I can truly say, that I designed and desired nothing but the glory of God, the good of souls, and a faithful discharge of my duty in preaching this sermon, and design and desire no other things in printing it, or this preface. I beg of the reader for the glory of God's free grace, for the honour of Christ, and his own eternal salvation, that he would deliberately read, and consider what he reads, and compare it with his bible, before he condemn it, as false and erroneous.

If the sermon, and preface be made useful to the reader, he is desired to give all the glory to God the father, God the son, and God the holy Spirit, the one only living and true God; and to pray for him, who is a sincere friend and servant to his soul in the work of the gospel,

JAMES ATKINSON.



I COR. i. 17.

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.



CORINTH was a place as full of all sorts of impiety, and wickedness, as any in the then heathen world; and yet out of this city did God, by the ministry of the apostle *Paul*, gather a church, which was enriched in all utterance, and all knowledge, and came behind in no gift, 1 Cor. i. 5, 6, 7. And yet there were many things among them, which were contrary to the revealed will of God, and therefore deserved reproof, and needed amendment. There were contentions, strifes, and envying among them; they were carnal, and walked more like men, than christians, especially of their attainment. They differed about the preachers of the gospel of Christ: One said he was of *Paul*, another that he was of *Apollos*, and a third that he was of *Cephas*, 1 Cor. i. 12. and chap. iii. 1, 3, 4. The apostle therefore sharply reproveth them for those things, chap. i. 13. chap. iii. 3, 4, 5. And having exhorted them to

B

unity,

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unity, and reprov'd them for their contentions, &c. doth inform them what his principal work was, and how he was to perform it, *chap. i. 17.* The gospel was then as much despised by some, as it was esteemed by others; and as it was *then*, so it is *now*. Unbelievers despised the gospel, and the apostles manner of preaching it; but true believers esteemed both. The apostle was not ashamed of either the matter or manner of his preaching; he owned both, and vindicated both. He had authority for both; *Christ sent him to preach the gospel*, and commanded him to preach it, *not with wisdom of words, &c.* That kind of preaching which the uncall'd were for, made the cross of Christ of none effect. God blessed that way of preaching which they despised, *ver. 18.* God would destroy that wisdom which they so much admired; that way of preaching which they esteem'd, should be ineffectual, *ver. 19, 20.* In the *17 ver.* the apostles informs them, who it was that had sent him to preach that which he did, and in the manner that he did. For *Christ sent, &c.* The apostle, when he saith *Christ sent me not to baptize*, doth not simply deny that Christ sent him, or that he had not a command to baptize; for Christ sent and commanded all the apostles to preach and baptize, *Mat. xxviii. 19.* And the apostle would not have rashly baptized any (neither *Crispus* nor *Gaius*) without a command for it, *ver. 14, 15, 16.* But he only informs them what the principal and main work was that Christ sent him to do, and that was *to preach the gospel, not with wisdom, &c.* From this verse I observe, * *That Christ has set and appointed in his churches, and given unto them officers, whose*

* That is, Christ sent me not so much to baptize, as to preach. Christ sent him and all his apostles, (*Matt. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.*) to do both; other-wise *Paul* should have sinn'd to have baptized any at all, without commission: But he sent 'em principally and especially to preach the gospel, as being a more principal work of their ministry. Mr. Robert's two Covenants p. 811.

I baptized very few of you, that not being the work to which I was principally call'd. My *Business* was rather to preach the gospel. Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel. And having mentioned his principal work as an apostle, he takes occasion from thence to tell them how, and in what manner he performed it; not, &c. Mr. *Mat. Clark*, Vol. Ser. p. 28.

Mr. Wood's Ordination, &c.

3

principal work and main business is to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words.

Christ Jesus, who is the king of Zion, and head of his churches, has appointed officers, as well as ordinances; and as he has appointed officers, so he has appointed them their work. There must not be any other officers, no more than ordinances appointed in the churches of Christ, than those that Christ has appointed. For Christ alone has authority to appoint officers and ordinances.

In the prosecution of this observation, I shall, as God assists, do these things.

I. I will lay before you a few things concerning *those officers*, whose principal work is to preach the gospel.

II I will open the *matter and manner* of their preaching.

III. I will give you some reasons why the preaching of the gospel of Christ is the *principal work and main business* of pastors, or teaching elders.

IV. Make application.

I. I will lay before you a few things concerning *those officers*, whose principal work and main business is to preach the gospel of Christ.

(1) The officers, which Christ has set in, and given unto his churches, whose principal work and main business, is to preach the gospel, are some of them *extraordinary*, some of them *ordinary*.

(1) Some of them are *extraordinary* officers, as

Χειροτονῶντες

Χειροτονεῖν.

The preacher
sent Jo. Mar-
lin. Sam. Pet.
to Fred. Wood-
al. Pag. 232.

Nullum ex-
emplum dari
potest ubi Χει-
ροτονεῖν signifi-
cat in cœtu E-
ligere; ita ut
Suffragium u-
nius aut duor-
um tantum ex-
pectetur.

the churches; but they must look them out and chuse them. The apostles would not impose deacons upon the Church, surely then they would not impose *Pastors* which are higher officers, upon any church of Christ. *Acts* xiv. 23. That the original word translated, *had ordain'd*, signifies *primarily*, and *properly to chuse by lifting up of the hands*, is owned by the learned of different denominations. And the proper native signification of the original word forbids that *Paul* and *Barnabas* should be the only persons that did chuse; for the word signifieth to chuse, or create by suffrages, and they being but two, there could be no place for suffrages. That a choice should be said to be made by most voices or the lifting up of the hand, in token of chusing, and yet but two to give their voices, is not imaginable. And that the choice should be made amongst a multitude, or in the presence of an assembly, as it here was [*in every church*], and yet but two to be the persons chusing, is still more unconceivable, as some have expressed it. Dr. *Ames* saith, no example can be given where Χειροτονεῖν signifies to chuse in a multitude, when the suffrage or voice of one or two only is expected. It is unscriptural, yea unreasonable, and contrary to the light of nature, that any man should be imposed upon any church, or set over her as her pastor against her will, or without her express consent by any man, or company of men whatever; for his whole work is to be conversant about their understandings, judgments, wills, and affections, as Dr. *O.* expresses it.

(3) The *ordinary* officers, after they are called and chosen, must be set a-part, and separated to the office and work to which they are called and chosen, *Acts* vi. 6. *ch.* xiii. 2, 3. *ch.* xiv. 23. This solemn separation, or ordination (as it is commonly call'd) of persons to the work of the ministry, consists of fasting and prayer, and imposition of hands. *Pray-*

er is the principal, it is the *essential* act of ordination, or that which gives the *essence* to it, as *Augustin* saith, to ordain is no other Thing but to pray. Christ has given power to his churches solemnly to set a-part or separate the men, that they have called and chosen to the office and work unto which they have chosen them: Or they may call teaching elders of other churches to assist and act in the solemn separation, or ordination of their pastors; but the elders of other churches act in it charitatively, not authoritatively.

Aug. Ordinare quid est aliud nisi orare.

(4) *Pastors* receive their message from Christ. Christ is the king of *Zion*, and head over his churches, and pastors are his ambassadors, who must receive their instructions from Christ their king and master, 1 *Cor.* v. 20. They must speak his words, deliver his message, *Ezek.* ii. 7. What he commands, they must teach; his command is their commission. *Matth.* xxviii. 20. They must preach that which he commands, whether those they preach unto will hear or forbear. They must deliver the whole message of Christ, neither add to it, nor take from it. *Jer.* xxvi. 2. *Deut.* xii. 32. 2 *Pet.* iv. 11. They may not deliver the lies and deceits of their own corrupt hearts. *Jer.* xxiii. 16, 26. They must not teach for doctrine the commandments and traditions of men. *Matth.* xv. 9. They must preach that, and only that which Christ bids. This brings me to the second thing in my proposed method.

(2) I will open a little the object, or matter and manner of their preaching.

(1) I will a little open the *object* or *matter* of pastor's preaching; the *principal matter* of their preaching is the *gospel of Christ Jesus*: Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel. I determined not to know (to know here signifies, (as Mr. Hurri-
has

Mr. Vavasor
Powell. Christ
and Moses
excellency, p.
142, 143, &c.

has observed) not barely to know, but also to make known, &c.) any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified, 1 Cor. ii. 2. To preach the gospel of Christ, is to tell; declare, and open good news, and glad tidings; and those glad tidings, which the gospel reveals and declares, are the joyful news of lapsed sinners salvation by God's free grace, and Christ's obedience. To preach the gospel, is to publish and open to sinners God's way of saving sinners, even the chiefest of sinners, Luke ii. 10, 11, 14. And the angel said unto them, fear not; for behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a saviour, which is Christ the lord. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men, Rom. x. 15. How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things. To preach the gospel, (as one expresses it) is to set forth the greatness and freeness of the father's love, and Christ's love, in all that was done and suffer'd by Christ, for the justification and salvation of sinners. To preach the gospel, is to declare the free and gracious promises of God's covenant made to sinners, viz. that God will put his laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts; that he will be to them a God: and they shall be to him a people, Heb. viii. 10, &c. That he will (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.) give them a new heart, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, &c. And that he will put the spirit within them, and cause them to walk in his Statutes, &c. This was the practice of Christ Jesus himself, (John vi. 45.) and of his apostles in their preaching, (Acts ii. 17. and xiii. 47.) to encourage sinners to believe and turn. To preach the gospel, is to open, and apply all those great and glorious mysteries (Ephes. iii. 8. Col. ii. 2.) concerning the Father, Son, and Spirit; and concerning the Saints happy state in grace and glory.

The original word in our text translated to preach the gospel doth properly signifie *to tell good news*, *Εὐαγγελίζεσθαι* or *to bring glad tidings*. Therefore to preach the gospel is to bring glad tidings, to tell good news to sinners. The word translated *gospel* also signifies a *joyful* or *good message*, or *glad tidings*; this is the proper notation of the original word, as *Squire Leigh* has observed in his *Critica Sacra*. It is true that the gospel is sometimes taken for the times of the new-testament, but it must not be so confined, for the gospel was preached to *Adam*, *Gen. iii. 15*. To *Abraham*, *Gal. iii. 8*. To the *Israelites*, *Heb. iv. 2*.

Sometimes the gospel is taken more *largely* and *improperly* for the whole doctrine and worship of the new-testament, including the history of Christ, all the promises, precepts, threatnings, faith in Christ, repentance unto life, with all that holy and spiritual obedience unto God required of true believers.

But the gospel *strictly* and *properly* taken is a *pure doctrine of grace*, a *revelation of God's way, method, and order of saving sinners*, viz. *freely by his grace, by and thro' the Redemption that is in Christ*, *Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26*. *Eph. ii. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8*. *2 Tim. i. 9*. *Tit. iii. 4, 5, 6, 7*. Now this is a joyful message, and glad tidings to sinners, *1 Tim. i. 15*. *Isa. lii. 7*. *Acts xiii. 32, 33*. Now if we take the gospel *properly*, and *distinguish* it from the law, which is *necessary* to be done, or else we shall not *understand* what we *mean* by either gospel or law; the gospel will appear to be pure declarations of God's free, undeserving, wonderful, transcendant love, grace and mercy to unworthy, sinful, wretched creatures, fallen men, and women, revealing Jesus Christ, his righteousness, and all the spiritual and eternal blessings, mercies, and privileges, which God has designed, and Christ has purchased for, and which shall be freely given unto, all those for whom Christ has died, *Rom. i. 16, 17*. *Tit. iii. 4, 5, &c.* *Heb. viii. 10, 11, 12*. *1 Job. iv. 9, 10*. The gospel preached

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to Adam, (Gen. iii. 15.) and afterwards to Abraham was no other than a free promise; and the promise of Christ contained a promise of all things pertaining to, and accompanying salvation. The gospel taken strictly and properly and distinguished from the Law has neither precept nor threatning in it; for all precepts and threatnings belong properly to the Law of God. And the gospel thus taken is no law, neither new nor old, severe or mild.

* *Omne evangelium propriè est bonum & laetum nuncium: At nulla comminatio, nullus terror est bonum & laetum nuncium. erga nulla comminatio, nullus terror, est propriè evangelium.* Cham. Tom. Ter. p. 520.

† *Synop. pap. Pag. 1014.*

* *Sic omnes iudicarii Existimant Christum esse novum quendam legislatorem, & judicant evangelium nihil aliud esse, quam librum, qui contineat novas leges de operibus;*

ut Turcæ de suo Alcorano somniant; sed satis legum est in Mose. Idèd evangelium est predicatio de Christo, quod remittat peccata, donet gratiam, justificet, & salvet peccatores. Quod autem precepta in evangelio reperiuntur; ista non sunt Evangelium, sed Expositiones leges, & appendixes Evangelii. Luth. Penior. Com. Gal. 2. 17. fo. 42. pag. 1. in Tom. 4.

* All that which is properly the gospel is a good and joyful message: but no threatning, no terror is a good and joyful message. Therefore no threatning, no terror is properly the gospel. Quest. Is not the gospel a new law? Answ. In no wise. Mr. Perkins, Vol. 2. Exp. Gal. pag. 363. Doctor Willet saith, † as whatsoever is contained in the old testament, doth not appertain to the law, as the promises of mercy in Christ fore-shewed by the prophets, which tho' they were uttered in the time of the law, yet belonged to the gospel: so in the new testament, all that we find there written, is not straight-way of the substance of the gospel: but the threatning of God's judgments there contain'd, (that is in the new testament,) do as well appertain to the law, as the comfortable promises in the old testament to the gospel. Luther tells us, * that all justiciaries esteem Christ to be a new legislator, and judge the gospel to be no other, than a book which contains new laws concerning works; as the Turks dream about their Alcoran; but there are laws enough in Moses. The gospel therefore is a preaching concerning Christ, that he forgives sins, gives grace, justifies, and saves Sinners. But that precepts are found in the gospel; those are not the gospel, but expositions of the law, and appendixes of the gospel.

Mr. Wood's Ordination, &c.

II.

We must *carefully distinguish* between the *gospel* and the *law*, or else we shall run into *dangerous mistakes*, and *soul-ruining errors*. Now to preach the *gospel strictly*, and *properly* taken is the *principal work* of the ministers of Christ. It is their principal work to hold forth, publish and open the great and glorious truths brought to light by the *gospel*.

Whence it is that pastors are said to have the *ministry of reconciliation* given them, *Ec.* 2 *Cor.* v. 18, 19. And are called *ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God*, 1 *Cor.* iv. 1. And to preach *the unfearchable riches of Christ*, *Ephes.* iii. 8. The *gospel* thus strictly and properly taken, is stiled *the word of God's grace*, *Acts* xx. 32. The *gospel* is stiled the word of God's grace, because it reveals that *eternal, free, and exceeding rich grace* of God in Christ, which is the *whole and only cause* of sinners *whole* salvation. The *gospel* is also stiled *the gospel of peace*, *Rom.* x. 15. It is called the *gospel of peace*, because it shews us, how the breach, which sin has made between God and man, is made up again. The *gospel* informs us *by what means* sinners have peace with God, in their own consciences, and eternal peace and rest. The *gospel* is called *the word of truth* and the *gospel* of our *salvation*, *Eph.* i. 13. The *gospel* is called a word of truth, not only because it is a true word, but because it is a word of an eminent truth. The greatest truth that ever God uttered, or shall utter, as *Dr. Goodwin* has expressed it. The *gospel* is called the *gospel of salvation*, because the matter of it is salvation, and it reveals the way and means by which sinners are saved.

Now tho' it is the *principal work* of the ministers of Christ to *preach the gospel strictly* and *properly* taken; yet they must preach the law of God in subserviency to the *gospel*. All are under the law, and condemned by it, as they are the child-

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ren of *apostate Adam*, Rom. iii. 9, 19. All are condemned, and become guilty before God, because all have sinn'd, and 'till they have vital union with Christ, they remain under the condemnatory sentence of the law, *John* iii. 17. *Rom.* vii. 4. *chap.* viii. 1. Sinners must be informed of this, and the spirituality of the law shewed them: The law must be preach'd, because by the law is the knowledge of sin, *Rom.* iii. 20. The law is the rule of our thoughts, words, and actions, the rule of all our obedience both to God and man; it informs us what we must do, and what we must not do. It must therefore be preached, that men, and women may know what God requires of them, and forbids them to do. Tho' true believers are freed from the law *as a covenant of works*, yet they are still under the law as a rule of life; they are under the law to Christ, *Rom.* vii. 4. *1 Cor.* ix. 21. The law of God doth eternally, and unchangeably oblige all men and women unto obedience to God; even that obedience which it requires, and in the manner wherein it requires it, as Dr. O. has expressed it. The law as to the substance of what it requires, and the manner of the performance of it, as unto measures and degrees, can no more be changed than the relation, that there is between God, and man, can be changed.

Pastors of churches must by and in their preaching give their testimony against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, and all sinful conformity to the world, and give warning that the end of such things is death. They must as they see occasion preach of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, *Acts* xxv. 25. Works of justice, righteousness, and charity, are incumbent duties on all persons. Yet these things are to be urged, not aiming at an outward reformation to rest there; but to make men and women see their need of Christ and his righteousness, spirit and grace. And
for

for the same reason, viz. to let persons see their need of *Christ*, and *his righteousness*, must the *sinfulness, imperfections, and insufficiency* of their own *inherent righteousness* (tho' true believers) to justify them in the sight of God, be set before them. But if our works be made preparatory for *Christ*, or joined with *Christ's righteousness* in justifying; or *Christ* is made a preparation (as I may say) or procuring cause that our duties should justify us; all these are great abominations, * as one has expressed it. You have the sum of what I have said, in the following quotations out of the writings of two doctors of divinity. † You know that there is a *special part* of God's word, which is the gospel, even as *Christ* the grand subject of it is called *eminently λόγος, the word*, John i. 1. Now what is the gospel? Truly it is nothing else (take it strictly in the special sense and meaning of it) but that doctrine which holds forth the grace of God justifying, pardoning, and saving sinners, and which holds forth *Jesus Christ made righteousness to us*. Now then this gospel is called in a peculiar respect *the word of faith*; and for what respect but this? Because it is a *special object of a special faith* which God saves us by: The apostle in Rom. x. 8. speaking of the gospel, in distinction from the law, and from all else in the scripture, faith, *this is the word of faith which we preach*. Then again add this to it, that tho' the apostles were to preach all the word of God, yet they had a *special ministry*; *the word of faith which we preach*, Rom. x. 8. Now the faith that is to be in christians, it is to be suited to their ministry; *so we preach, and so ye believe*, 1 Cor. xv. 11. Now then if that *preaching of remission of sins* in the name of *Christ*, if *preaching the righteousness of God thro' faith*, the *righteousness of faith*, which is in the son of God, if this were the *special proper ministry* of the apostles, then that is the *special faith* of a christian which is suited to this ministry:

* Mr. Beart vindic. etern. Law, and everlasting. gospel second part, pag. 64, &c.
† Dr. Goodwin's works, fourth vol. pt. 2d. pag. 25, 26.

* Dr. Sclater's exposition. Rom. i. 1. pag. 10.

nistry: Now it is evident that this was the special thing that they preached in Acts xx. 24. Thus saith the apostle, *so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus*: What was that? To testify the gospel of the grace of God. Take the gospel as it holds forth the grace of God, that is, that special grace of God, his free grace in pardoning, saving, and justifying sinners; this is the special ministry (saith he) which I received of Jesus Christ. * The word (that is the gospel) in general signifies any tidings of good things. In the old testament it imports or signifies the joyful tidings of redemption promised to be wrought by Christ, when the fulness of time should be expired: In this place (viz. Rom. i. 1.) and almost generally in the new testament, it imports the glad tidings of reconciliation, really wrought by Christ exhibited in the flesh: This also is the principal matter of our ministry, Mark xvi. 15. As the dove with the olive branch in her mouth, Gen. viii. 11. So ought a minister to be to his people, bringing tidings of good things. Quest. May not a minister preach the law? Ans. Yes; as a doctrine subordinate to the gospel, —yet this truly with all; the proper and principal office of our ministry, is to preach unto God's people the glad tidings of reconciliation with God, remission of sins, enterance into heaven, procured by Christ Jesus.

(2) I will open a little the manner of their preaching the gospel.

(2) Negatively, or how they must not preach the gospel. The apostle in our text informs us how they must not preach it; *not with wisdom of words*, and gives us a reason why they must not so preach it; *least the cross of Christ should be of none effect*. Ministers must not preach the gospel of Christ in terms of philosophical wisdom, or rhetorical art. Ministers must not preach the gospel with the enticing words

words of man's wisdom, 1 Cor. ii. 4. Not with ostentation of wit, or human elocution, not with rhetorical sophisms, or plausible insinuating deceptions, as a learned person has expressed it. Not with wisdom of words, &c. * Wherein he returns to his former argument, and obliquely touches upon the cause of their unhappy divisions, viz. The vanity of some teachers, who affected a name for wisdom and eloquence; and the folly of some hearers, who admired them upon that account. This the apostle tells them he had carefully avoided, and for this reason, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect; that is, lest the plain, simple preaching of a crucified Christ, should be thought insufficient to work faith, and command their belief, without the assistance and force of human wisdom and eloquence; and the effects of it should rather be ascribed to the arguments and persuasions of men, than the efficacy and power of God.

† Bp. Reynolds's Sermon. preach. Christ Vol. Ser. pag. 1033.

* Mr. Clark Vol. Ser. pag. 28.

(2) Positively, or how pastors must preach the gospel. Pastors must not only preach the gospel of Christ, but they must also preach it in such a manner as Christ requires. Ministers of Christ must preach what he bids them, and as he bids them. They must preach in demonstration of the spirit, and of power, &c. 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. They must preach so as they may make manifest the gospel of Christ as they ought, Col. iv. 4. I might here mention many things, but time will allow me only to hint at a few.

(1) Ministers of Christ must preach the gospel plainly, so that every one who hears may understand their words, and phrases. Paul was a man, that was acquainted with the writings of philosophers and poets, and was well instructed in the Jewish learning, yet he did not use the ornaments of oratory, nor the fine notions of philosophy; but with great

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great plainness of speech preach'd the gospel of Christ, and set-forth Christ, and him crucified, 1 Cor. ii. 1, 4. Ministers, when they preach the gospel, must make use of such words, and phrases as the meanest capacity may understand what they say concerning the gospel. Preaching in an unknown Tongue is as bad as praying in an unknown tongue. They who preach not according to the capacity of those who hear them, are as barbarians to them who hear; and they, who hear, are as barbarians to them who preach, 1 Cor. xiv. 9. —23, 24, 25. Christ by his own example has taught Ministers how they ought to preach, Mark iv. 33. Christ did not speak as he was able to speak, but as his hearers were able to understand. But how unlike to Christ, the prophets, and the apostles; are those who make plain truths difficult, and easie truths hard. Some are very reserv'd, and dark in their preaching; they preach as if they had no mind to be understood, or were affraid to preach gospel truths plainly. God has owned, and crown'd with success plain preaching, tho' some count it foolishness: but to them, who are saved, it is the power of God, 1 Cor. i. 18, 21.

(2) Ministers of Christ must preach the gospel of Christ *faithfully and sincerely*. They must not dissemble, suppress, omit, or conceal any *necessary truth*. They must not daub with untemper'd Mortar. They must deliver the *whole counsel of God*. They must not endeavour to please the fancies, and humours, and lusts of men; but God who tries the hearts. *Jer. xxiii. 28. And he that has my word, let him speak my word faithfully; what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.* Acts xx. 27. 1 Thes. ii. 3, 4, 5. *For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor in guile: But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which tries our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak*

*cloak of covetousness ; God is witness. * Pastors must not conceal, nor mince the doctrine of free-grace out of fear that some may turn it into lasciviousness, or reproach them for it. That would be dangerous, yea, destructive to their own souls, and the souls of them who hear them. Ministers must tell the people the whole truth, tho' they be judged enemies for so doing, Gal. iv. 16. Ministers must preach the gospel sincerely aiming at God's glory, and the salvation of those that hear them. They must aim and endeavour to profit men, and women, and not to get their applause, or wordly advantage to themselves, 1 Cor. ix. 19, &c. ch. x. 33. Not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved, 2 Cor. ii. 17. But as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ, 2 Cor. xii. 19. Those ministers will have a dreadful account to give, who do not preach the gospel faithfully and sincerely. Pastors have the care of souls, one of which is of more value than all this world, and they cannot be free from the blood of those that perish for want of knowledge and faith thro' their unfaithfulness; the apostle was free from the blood of all men, because he shunned not to declare all the counsel of God, Acts xx. 27. But pastors that on purpose shun to declare necessary truths cannot be free from the blood of them that Perish.*

* It may be that some or other, who do believe these things to be blessed and glorious truths, may think it had been better not to have spoken them out. I must crave leave in this to dissent from them, I do not think that in such a subject we should at such a time be meal-mouthed. Had Luther, Zuinglius, Calvin, Zanchy, and others of the first reformers been as faint and complying in their expressions, as some very great & good Men then were; And as Peter Martyr himself for sometime was, the precious truths of God had been greatly obscured, and the light thereof not propagated down to of God thro'

(3) *Pastors must preach the gospel of Christ zealously and boldly. Pastors must preach with a fervent zeal for, and love to, God, the souls of those who hear them, and the gospel of Christ, 2 Cor. v. 13, 14. Phil. i. 15, 16, 17. 2 Cor. xii. 15. Pastors must not fear the faces of any proud presumptuous sinners, blasphemous heretical persons, who dare oppose, reproach, contemn, and corrupt the gospel of Christ Jesus, Phil. i. 27, 28. If any be so bold-*
us, as it is at this Day. Mr. Nath. Mather. The righteousness of faith, &c. pag. 141, 142.

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ly wicked as to speak against the gospel of Christ; Pastors should not be so *timorous* as not to speak for it, and vindicate it. Shall *pastors* be affraid to offend such by doing their duty, as are not affraid to offend God by opposing and despising the word of his grace? Should not we fear God, his wrath and displeasure, more than men and their frowns? *Jer. i. 17. Acts iv. 17, 18, 19, 20.* Mr. Brooks saith, the cowardice of the minister is cruelty. If he fears the faces of men, he is a murderer of the souls of men. Luther had rather be accounted any thing than proved guilty of wicked silence in the Lord Jesus Christ's case. Pastor's boldness and zeal must be in such away, as that when they shew their zeal for Christ and his gospel, and against persons errors and sins, they may also manifest their love to their persons, and desire of their salvation.

(4) Pastors must preach the gospel of Christ purely, without corrupting, adulterating and mingling it. *2 Cor. ii. 17. For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God.* As there were corrupters of the gospel then, so there are now. It is a metaphorical word, taken from deceitful vintners, who for gain mix water with wine. The gospel is a pure doctrine of grace (as I have said) and as such it must be preached. Pastors must not corrupt or adulterate the glorious and everlasting gospel, the glad tidings revealed in the gospel with their own inventions, fancies, and wisdom; it is glorious in it self, but every addition of humane wisdom eclipses and darkens it's glory. They must not mingle the law and the gospel together. The law, it is true, is necessary, and must, (as I have said) be preached, but it must not be mixed with the gospel; for the jumbling of the law and the gospel together confounds poor souls: they cannot know what is law, what is gospel, nor what is the Covenant of works, nor what is the Covenant of grace. Mingling the law, and the gospel to-

together tends to confound souls in many great points which most nearly concern God's glory and their souls eternal salvation. To mix, and mingle the law with the gospel, is to confound things which are distinct, and different, and by confounding them, we lose both law and gospel, and are in great danger in the end to lose our own souls. For when the law is mingled with the gospel, or when works are joined with the free grace of God, and the righteousness of Christ in the justification of sinners in the sight of God, the gospel by this alteration becomes another gospel than that which God has revealed; yea, it becomes no true gospel, and they that thus pervert the gospel, and presume to preach this mingled gospel are accursed; and if they that presume to preach it be accursed, shall those that hear, receive and believe it, not be accursed? Gal. i. 8. To mingle the law with the gospel cannot be done without eclipsing the glory of God's free-grace by which sinners are saved, nor without dishonouring Christ, and it cannot be done without the greatest hazard and prejudice to the souls of sinners; but it hides from them that life which Christ has brought to light thro' the gospel; it hides from sinners God's way of saving sinners. Pastors ought therefore to take special care to preach the gospel of Christ purely, without any adulteration, without mingling the law with it. Luther saith, * *The gospel is such a doctrine as admits no law: Yea, it must be separated as far from the law as there is distance between heaven and earth.* Our reformers reckoned it a very pernicious thing to mingle and confound law and gospel. † As the quotation in the margin evinces.

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† They (that is, other reformers) very well knew (as both Chemni-

lius and Beza informs us) that playing with the ambiguity of the word law, confounded law and gospel, laid the root of the most pernicious errors to spring up, and over-spread the church with nothing but tares, or worser weeds, in the room of nourishing corn. They were aware that the perplexed thoughts of law and gospel chained together, by the unnatural mixture gave birth to that monstrous metamorphosis, by which the monks transformed the gospel into a law; and as they

(3) I will now give you some reasons why the preaching of the gospel of Christ is the *principal work* and *main business* of pastors. The preaching of the gospel *strictly* and *properly* taken is the *principal work* of pastors, for the reasons which follow.

(1) Because the gospel of Christ reveals the *way* and *means* whereby God saves sinners, the chief of sinners; it makes known the *way of salvation*, reveals, and discovers the *great truths* which are *necessary* to be known, and believed. Christ has brought *light and immortality to light thro' the gospel*. 2 Tim. i. 10. Christ has brought life to light thro' the gospel as the outward means. It is by the gospel that we come to know that there is life for fallen sinful men and women. The law curses all men and women, because they have sinn'd, not continued to do what the law requires, Gal. iii. 10. The gospel reveals that eternal, free, and exceeding rich love, grace, and favour which is in God, by which sinners are saved, Rom. xvi. 25, 26. Eph. ii. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. This could never have been discovered, and known, unless God had revealed it, and it is no where revealed but in, and by the gospel. The gospel reveals the great and only Saviour. The law knows nothing of Christ Jesus; it is the gospel that reveals him who saves sinners. The gospel reveals who, and what Christ is, and what he has done and suffered in the room and stead of those that were given unto him. The gospel informs us,

they were not at all ignorant that the *proper remedy* to cure these distemper'd thoughts, was *exactly* to *distinguish* between the one, and the other, they *fitly* made a good and *successful* use of it: they would give *every thing* its *proper name* *fitable* to its *nature*. If they *spoke* of *works*, they meant a *law* *prescribing* them, and commanding obedience under severe penalties; but then in thus thinking, speaking, or writing, the *gospel* never came into their minds, nor was *form'd* in their voice, nor *dropped* from their pens. But when ever an *idea*, or *notion* of *grace* arose in their minds, then indeed the *next* following *thought* was the *gospel* of Christ, &c. Mr. Tho. Goodwin's discourse of the true nature of the *gospel*. Pag. 35, 36.

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that *Christ Jesus is the son of the living God, that he is God, the most high God, the great and mighty God, who is over all, God blessed for ever, Mat. xvi. 16. Tit. ii. 13. Isa. ix. 6. Rom. ix. 5.* That there are two natures in Christ, the divine and humane, is clearly revealed by the gospel, *Isa. ix. 6. Mat. i. 23. John i. 14. Rom. i. 3, 4. chap. ix. 5.* The gospel informs us, that Christ Jesus is the surety of the new and better covenant, and the only mediator between God and man, *Heb. vii. 22. 1 Tim. ii. 5.* Christ's offices and all his mediatory transactions are made known in and by the gospel. The gospel discovers unto us how, by, and for what, sinners are justified in the sight of God. The gospel tells us, that they are *justified freely by God's grace thro' the redemption which is in Christ, Rom. iii. 24.* They are *justified only and wholly by Christ's imputed righteousness in God's sight.* Nothing can be more clearly revealed than this great, glorious, and comfortable truth is, in and by the gospel; * yet this piece of gospel revelation has been, and still is *strangely perverted, much opposed and denied,* and that by several that have made a *great profession of Christ, and a great noise about that profession.* I will direct you to a few texts, where you have this *important truth, viz. the justification of sinners alone by Christ's righteousness imputed unto them in the sight of God, clearly revealed. Acts xiii. 39. And by him (that is Christ) all that believe are justified from all things, &c.* This is a text that might silence all perverters and oppo-

*—There are others who have suck'd in *Arminian and Socinian Notions*; are offended at the doctrines of the gospel, that have reference to the person, the offices, the mediation, the satisfaction, and the intercession of Christ, they love lectures of morality, temperance, and justice; but they cannot endure to hear of faith in Christ, and

of going out of themselves, and leaning upon Christ for righteousness, eternal life and salvation. This is an error of so pernicious a consequence, that I cannot but tremble at the thoughts of it. This was the error the apostle Paul condemned in the Jews, and for which they were condemned, and cast off by God. *Rom. x. 3. Being ignorant of God's righteousness, they went about to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit to the righteousness of God.* And why such persons should profess themselves to be christians, who deny the very fundamental Articles of Christianity, and set themselves in opposition to the principal design, and end of the gospel, to me is altogether unaccountable. Mr. Ashwood's pract. discourses, pag. 104.

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sers of justification alone by Christ's imputed righteousness in God's sight. It is by *Christ* that all, that do believe, are justified, not by *their faith* as a work, *repentance* and *sincere obedience*. By *Christ alone*, and not by *Christ and their works*. It is by Christ that all, that believe, are justified from all things; that is, from all their sins, both original and actual, from their unbelief and impenitance, and every sin, 1 Cor. i. 30. Phil. iii. 8, 9. 2 Cor. v. 21. 1 Job. i. 7.

The gospel reveals the great love and loveliness of Christ, Ephes. iii. 18, 19. 1 Job. iii. 16. Cant. v. 10, 16. The gospel reveals the all-sufficiency and self-sufficiency of Christ to save sinners, even the chief of sinners, Job. xvii. 2. Heb. vii. 25. 1 Job. i. 7. 1 Tim. i. 15. Acts iv. 12. chap. xiii. 38, 39. The gospel informs us that all fulness dwells in Christ, and that his riches are unsearchable. Col. i. 19. Ephes. iv. 8.

The person, office, works, and love of God the holy spirit, are all revealed in the gospel. The gospel tells us, where spiritual life, light, power, grace, faith, repentance, love, and every spiritual blessing is, viz. in Christ, Job. x. 10. Col. i. 19. chap. ii. 3. and iii. 3. Ephes. i. 7. Isa. xlv. 24, 25. Phil. i. 29. 1 Job. v. 10. Job. i. 16.

And the gospel informs us how these spiritual blessings and mercies are bestowed upon and wrought in dead, blind, sinful, unworthy men and women: they are given freely, without money and without price, Isa. lv. 1. Rom. viii. 32. The gospel informs us, that God freely bestowes Christ upon unworthy, dead, guilty, blind sinners, and with Christ he freely gives all the blessings of the new covenant, the covenant of grace, viz. pardon, spiritual life, faith, repentance, grace and glory, Acts v. 31. Rom. v. 17, 21. chap. vi. 23. Eph. ii. 8. Phil. i. 29.

And the gospel informs us, that God by his spirit works effectually and efficaciously in regenerating, quick-

quickening, and producing spiritual life, light, power, faith, and repentance, in *dead, dark and unbelieving impenitent Sinners*, *Ephes. i. 17, 18, 19, 20.*

(2) To preach the gospel is the principal work of ministers of Christ, because this preaching is the *ordinary outward means* by which God *regenerates and converts* Sinners. The preaching of the gospel is the instrument which God ordinarily makes use of to effect this great and mighty work, *Regeneration*, *1 Cor. i. 18, 21, 24, 25. Rom. i. 16.* that is, it is a powerful instrument in God's hand to regenerate sinners, to make them wise unto salvation. Tho' the preaching of the gospel be look'd upon as a foolish thing in the world, yet God makes use of it to effect that which all the men of the world with all their wisdom, and power, cannot effect. *Jam. i. 18.* The impulsive moving cause of regeneration is *the good pleasure of God; he has mercy on whom he will have mercy*, regenerates one and not another, *because it seems good unto him to do so*, *Mat. xi. 24, 25.* The Spirit of God is the *efficient Cause*, or *worker* of regeneration, *Joh. iii. 3, 5.* The preaching of the gospel the *ordinary outward means*, or *instrumental Cause*, *Gal. iii. 2.* Dr. Taylor saith, by works is meant the *doctrine of justification by works* of the law, and by hearing of faith, is meant the *doctrine of the gospel*, hearing being put for the thing heard, and faith, for the doctrine believed. The believing *Galatians* received the spirit which works regeneration, faith, and repentance *not by or in hearing the law preach'd*, but *by or in hearing the gospel preach'd*. This we must carefully observe that *this power of the gospel stands not in the letters and syllables of it*, but *depends wholly in respect of efficacy upon the spirits working with or by it*, *2 Cor. x. iv chap. 3, 6. 1 Cor. iii. 6.* The gospel is but the *instrument*, God the *efficient cause*. * The gospel is the power of God in a way of *instrumentality*, (as Mr. Charnock

* Disc. Attrib. Vol. 1. p. 468, 470.

* The outward instrument whereby the Spirit of God uses to work sanctification, and holiness in the heart of man, is the preaching of the glad tidings of the gospel, the covenant of grace, the promises of God's free grace and mercy in Christ. True it is, the Lord sometimes by his judgments and plagues, but more usually by the ministry of the law uses to prepare men unto grace, and work a kind of repentance and change in the heart of man. But the means whereby he uses to sanctifie a man indeed, to mortifie and

kill sin in the root, to work a saving change, and true grace in his heart, is by preaching the gospel, and making known to him God's mercy in Christ. Two plain testimonies I will give you for this, 2 Cor. iii. 6, 8. Gal. iii. 2. that is, by hearing the doctrine of faith, the doctrine of the gospel which teaches Justification by faith alone. Mr. Hilderham on Psal. li. pag. 732.

has worded it) but the almightiness of God is the principal in way of efficiency. The gospel is not as a bare word spoken, and proposing the thing; but as backed with a higher efficacy of grace: as the sword doth instrumentally cut, but the arm that wields it gives the blow, and makes it successful in the stroke. But this gospel is the power of God, because he edges this by his own power, to surmount all resistance, and vanquish the greatest malice of that man he designs to work upon. The manner of conversion shews no less the power of God. There is not only an irresistible force used in it; but an agreeable sweetness. The power is so efficacious, that nothing can vanquish it; and so sweet, that none did ever complain of it. The almighty vertue displays it self invincibly, yet without constraint; compelling the will without offering violence to it, and making it cease to be will: not forcing it, but changing it; not dragging it, but drawing it; making it will, where before it willed; removing the corrupt nature of the will, without invading the created nature and rights of the Faculties; not working in us against the physical nature of the will, but working to will, (Phil. ii. 13.) This work is therefore called creation, resurrection, to shew it's irresistible power; 'tis called illumination, perswasion, drawing, to shew the suitableness of it's efficacy to the nature of the humane faculties: 'Tis a drawing with cords, which testifies an invincible strength; but with cords of love, which testifies a delightful conquest: 'Tis hard to determine whether it be more powerful than sweet, or more sweet than powerful.

(3) To preach the gospel of Christ is the principal work of a pastor, because the preaching of the gos-

Mr. Wood's Ordination, &c. 23

gospel of Christ is the *outward and ordinary means by which God edifies and comforts* true believers. By it God feeds, nourishes, corroborates, and consoles the new creature wrought in the Soul, when regenerated. By it God increases spiritual life, saving knowledge, living faith, sincere love, and unfeigned repentance, &c. 1 *Pet.* ii. 1, 2, 3. By the preaching of the gospel true believers grow in spiritual knowledge, in the knowledge of God in Christ, and of Christ crucified; by it they grow stronger in faith, and more fervent in love, and are more and more sanctified, *Isa.* xl. 31. *Acts* xx. 32. *Job.* xvii. 19. It is by the preaching of the gospel that God comforts true believers when they are sorrowful, *Is.* lxi. 1, 2, 3. * This (saith Dr. *Sclater*) has the gospel *peculiar to itself*, to wit, to reveal the way of salvation, to be an instrument to work faith, confirm and increase it in true believers, so that *no other doctrine partakes in it*, no not the law itself, *being in itself the ministry of Condemnation* (2 *Cor.* iii. 6.) and when it is most powerful, working nothing but a preparation to the grace published and wrought by the gospel, *Gal.* iii. 24. *Heb.* vii. 19.

* *Exposit.*
Rom. chap. i.
16. pag. 69.

† The end and use of the gospel is, first to manifest that righteousness in Christ, whereby the whole law is satisfied and salvation attain'd. Secondly, it is the instrument, and as it were, the conduit Pipe of the Holy-ghost to fashion and derive faith into the soul: By which faith, they which believe, do as with an hand, apprehend Christ's righteousness, *Rom.* i. 16, 17. *Job.* vi. 63. 1 *Cor.* i. 21.

† *Mr. Perkins*, 1 Vol. p. 70.

I must here add some-thing concerning the two last particulars, lest there be a wrong interpretation put upon them, and a wrong use made of them; for I have reason to think that some will be ready enough to carp at, contemn, and despise what I have written.

By my asserting that the preaching of the gospel is the ordinary outward means by which God con-

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verts sinners, and edifies and comforts Saints, I do not mean that it is the *only* outward means, or instrument by which God converts sinners, and edifies and comforts saints; but I mean, that it is the most *usual outward* means, by which God *generally* converts sinners, and edifies and comforts saints. I readily acknowledge that God has converted sinners by other means, as reading the gospel, or reading some books treating of, opening and explaining the gospel, &c. And that God edifies and comforts by other means, as reading, meditating, praying, spiritual-conference, and the ordinance of the Lord's-supper. But yet it is but rarely. God *frequently* makes use of the law opened to convince of sin, for by it is the knowledge of sin, *Rom. iii. 29.* But that God often makes use of the law for or in *the conversion* of sinners I do *not believe*, because God has not (that I remember) made *use* of it in converting *any* of those *persons* whose conversion is recorded in scripture; yet I will not say that he never doth it.

(4) The APPLICATION.

(1) Is it so that Christ has set in and given unto his churches officers, whose principal work is to preach the gospel, then we may infer hence that Christ's love to, and care of, his people is, *exceeding great*; it is a *transcendant love*. He has not only given them the gospel, but also officers to open and apply it, *Jer. iii. 15. Ezek. xxxiv. 11. Eph. iv. 11.* And he gave, &c.

(2) Is it so that the preaching of the gospel of Christ is the principal work of pastors, then we may learn hence that those who are set a-part to that office and work, should have a *right knowledge* of the *gospel of Christ*. A man should not desire the office of a pastor, 'till he has some right spiritual-knowledge of the gospel. One ignorant of the gospel of Christ is altogether unfit to be a pastor;

pastor; tho' he may know languages, arts and sciences. Tho' the knowledge of tongues, arts and sciences may be serviceable (if rightly improv'd and used) to ministers of the gospel, *especially* the knowledge of these tongues in which the old and new testaments were spoken; yet the knowledge of tongues, arts and sciences, without a right-spiritual knowledge of the gospel of Christ, will not qualify persons, as Christ requires, for pastors of churches. Such may preach *morality*, they may preach *themselves*; but they cannot preach Christ Jesus the Lord as they ought. They cannot preach the gospel a-right to others who have not a right knowledge of it themselves. If the *blind* lead the *blind*, both may fall into the ditch, *Isa.* ix. 16. Ignorance causes error, and error destruction. They are the ambassadors of Christ, and therefore ought to know his revealed will, the message which they must tell to sinners: They have the word of reconciliation committed unto them, and so ought to know it, or else they cannot open it to others. If persons do not know the gospel of Christ they cannot preach it; they may preach what they *fancy* to be it, but the *gospel* of Christ they cannot preach.

(3) Is it so that preaching the gospel of Christ is telling, bringing and opening a joyful message, glad tidings, then we may hence infer, that the people should give ministers of the gospel *kind entertainment*, and *encourage* them in their work. Kind entertainment is what persons which bring good news may expect; may not then ministers of the gospel expect kind entertainment, who bring the best news that ever sinners heard, or can hear? But tho' this is what they might expect, they seldom meet with it.

The best and most faithful ministers of Christ have met with bad treatment from sinners; the generality of those among whom they preached, re-

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proached, reviled, and persecuted them. They were accounted the filth and off-scouring of the world; and both themselves, and their message *spitefully* rejected. We then need not think it *strange* if we meet with the like treatment. One would think if pastors were not kindly entertained for their personal gifts, and the dignity of their office, they should for Christ's sake, whose ambassadors they are, and for their joyful message sake. They that despise the faithful ministers of Christ, despise Christ, and they that despise Christ, despise him that sent Christ; and is not this an heinous Sin? Luke x. 16.

(4) Is it so that the principal work, and main business of pastors is to preach the gospel of Christ, then we may infer hence, that they should *principally* attend on this work, *diligently* and *faithfully* perform it. It is a pastor's principal work, and therefore he must take care that it be done, yea, that it be *well done*, *faithfully* done according to his best skill, and power. A pastor has other work, for as we said before, he must preach the law, and he must also administer the ordinances of the new testament, baptism and the Lord's-supper, and mind that the discipline of Christ be duly exercised, &c.

But the preaching of the gospel of Christ is his principal work, and must *chiefly* be minded.

It concerns God's glory, and the salvation of those that hear them, and their own salvation; and therefore cannot be *neglected*, or *carelessly* performed without *dishonour* to God, and *wrong* to their own and other souls, Prov. viii. 36. *But he that sins against me wrongs his own soul.* Jer. xlviii. 10. *Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully, or negligently.* 1 Cor. xi. 16. *For tho' I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for a*

necessity is laid upon me; yea, wo is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.

(5) Is it so that the gospel reveals unto us the way of salvation, and that the preaching of it, is the outward ordinary means or instrument, by which God regenerates sinners, edifies and comforts saints, then we may infer hence that we have good reason to be *thankful* for the gospel, and gospel ministry. We have destroyed our selves by our sins, are all guilty before God as we are the children of apostate *Adam*, all dead in trespasses and sins; the gospel reveals unto us how God saves, pardons, quickens, and glorifies such guilty, dead, and miserable creatures; and is the instrument whereby God regenerates sinners, and edifies and comforts saints. Surely then those that enjoy the gospel and a gospel ministry, are bound to much thankfulness. To enjoy the gospel and a gospel ministry, is a *much greater mercy* and privilege than to enjoy houses and lands, gold and silver; tho' it is to be feared, there are but few that *esteem* the gospel and the ministry thereof above the fore-mentioned worldly enjoyments. They are but few that can *truly* say as the psalmist did, in *Psal.* cxix. 72, 127. God has not dealt so with every nation as he has done with this; and where *no vision* is there the People *perish*. We should, one would think, praise God with one accord for the enjoyment of the gospel and gospel ministry; but alas! some are *so far* from being *thankful*, that they *contemn, reproach, and revile* both the *gospel* and a *gospel-ministry*. But let us praise God for the glad tidings of the gospel, let us be thankful, that *light* is risen upon us, that *the day spring from on high* has visited us, and that yet our eyes behold the preachers of the gospel.

(6) Is it so that the preaching of the gospel is the

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the principal work of pastors, then we may infer hence, that it is the duty of the People to *hear* the gospel preached, and to *receive* it in faith and love unfeignedly. If it be the principal work of the ministers of Christ to preach the gospel *plainly, faithfully, and purely*, it is *certainly* the duty of the people to hear it *attentively, reverently, constantly, and believingly*. I will direct you to a few texts, which will inform you how you ought to attend on this ordinance, the preaching of the gospel. 1. *Pet. ii. 1, 2, 3. Heb. iv. 2. Jam. i. 19, 20, 21.* One would think that sinners would be very *attentive* when they hear the gospel of peace preached, and *heartily* wel-come all the glad tidings of good things. But yet it is to be feared that there are *multitudes* in this day of *apostacy* that are *more* attentive to hear those things that tend nothing to the good, but may be to the *great hurt and detriment* of their *precious* and *immortal* souls, than they are to hear the gospel preached, which is the power of God unto salvation.

The *carriage* of some at Sermons may be for a lamentation; they behave themselves as if the gospel preached no way concerned them. And yet it concerns all, both sinners and saints; for God by it converts sinners and edifies and comforts saints. That one should neglect to hear the gospel, another despise it, and a third persecute it, and those that preach it, is what we ought to *lament*, and pity them that act so *foolishly*, *Matt. xxii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8.* They are *enemies* to their own precious souls, to their eternal happiness, who instead of receiving the gospel *joyfully* in *faith* and *love*; do *treat* it and those that bring it with *scorn* and *derision*, and rise up against it and *them* with a *spirit* of *rebellion* and *persecution*.

(7) Is it so that the gospel is the outward means which reveals the way of salvation, and the preaching

ing of it the outward and ordinary means by which God regenerates sinners and edifies and comforts saints, then let us learn hence to *pray importunately* unto God to bless his own appointment, to make the gospel and the *plain* and *pure* preaching of it, *successful*. Let us all both ministers and people, pray earnestly and believingly unto God to manifest and put forth his almighty power by the gospel preached, for the conversion and salvation of sinners. *Pastors* will have reason to say, *Who has believed our report, 'till God reveal his arm, lend his hand, and pour his spirit from on high upon sinners,* Isa. liii. 1. chap. xxxii. 15. Acts xi. 21. It is God that quickens those that are dead in trespasses and sins, that enlightens those that are blind, and makes the stubborn a willing and obedient People. *Ephes.* ii. 1, &c. *Isa.* xlii. 16. *John* vi. 45. *Psal.* cx. 3. *Pastors* are but instruments, and their preaching the gospel is but an instrument; and what can instruments do without some to use them and work by them? *Pastors* can do nothing of themselves, but as Christ works by them. *Rom.* xv. 18. As if he should have said, I dare not for all the world think or say that I made the *Gentiles*, that heard me to be obedient both in word and deed; no, no, it was Christ and he *alone* that did it, he did work it by me as his poor instrument. And it is God in Christ by the preaching of the gospel, that makes true believers to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, and comforts them, *Hos.* xiv. 5. *Isa.* li. 12. *Paul* may plant, and *Apollos* water, but it is *God* who gives the *increase*. We should then pray hard unto God, wrestle with him at the throne of Grace, that he would by the preaching of the gospel convert sinners, build up and comfort true believers.

F I N I S

